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**Principles and elements
of a Global Alliance for ICT and Development
(Multi-stakeholder Forum)¹**

In July 2004, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has requested the Chairman of the United Nations ICT Task Force to develop detailed proposals on an alliance for information and communication technologies (ICT) and development. In implementation of this request, open on-line and physical consultations with all stakeholders were launched following the Seventh meeting of the United Nations ICT Task Force in Berlin (November 2004) and have continued through open consultations held on 21 February 2005 in Geneva, on 13 April 2005 in Dublin and on 31 May 2005 in Shanghai. Members of the Task Force discussed this matter extensively at the meeting of the Task Force on 15 April 2005 in Dublin, as well as on-line. As an input to the discussion, evaluations of the experience, strengths and weaknesses of the ICT Task Force were prepared by the secretariat of the Task Force, by an academic team from the Syracuse University and by a Danish academic.

Letters requesting comments on successive revised drafts of “principles and elements” were sent to all Permanent Missions in New York on 21 March and 14 June 2005. A series of broad consultations was undertaken, on the Chairman’s behalf, in Europe, as well as in conjunction with other events such as the meeting of the Group of the Friends of the Chair (Geneva, 13 June 2005) and the meeting of WGIG (Geneva, 14-17 June 2005).

The final round of consultations was held in conjunction with the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis at an open meeting on 17 November 2005 and at the ICT Task Force meeting on 18 November. These two meetings focused on the meaning of WSIS outcomes, in particular as regards a future Internet Governance Forum and the overall WSIS follow up, for the proposed Global Alliance.

Outcome of open consultations and discussions

As a result of these open consultations and discussions a broad consensus has emerged that there is a need to continue an open, transparent, multi-stakeholder dialogue on the focused role of ICT in development. A multi-stakeholder, Global Alliance for ICT and Development functioning in a forum format was seen by most participants as the optimal approach.

¹ Working title.

The mission of the Alliance will be to respond to the need and demand for an inclusive global forum and platform for cross-sectoral policy dialogue, conducted in an open, multi-stakeholder and transparent manner, on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, notably reduction of poverty.

A principal distinguishing feature of the Alliance, and its key value added, will be in providing a multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral platform and forum that will bring together all stakeholders representing relevant constituencies (for example, in governments - development cooperation, foreign policy, finance, social, sectoral (health, education) and regulatory agencies; in the private sector - industry and workers associations, producers and consumers of ICT, the media; in civil society – NGOs, CSOs, foundations, scientific, academic and ICT communities and individuals providing advocacy and oversight on Information Society issues and implementing programs addressing MDGs).

At present, no such cross-sectoral platform or forum exist. Policy debate – even when undertaken in a multi-stakeholder format – is fragmented into multiple, distinct sectoral processes with inadequate cross-fertilization. As a result, while the challenge of harnessing the potential of ICT for development is by definition cross-sectoral, our collective response to this challenge remains fragmented. As noted during the WSIS process, multi-dimensional issues are not effectively addressed within any one extant organization; complementarities, gaps and tensions among diverse existing efforts and initiatives are not always identified and acted upon; comparative, cross-sectoral analysis of experience with a view to promoting best practices is not being adequately performed.

Networks such as the Global Knowledge Partnership are very valuable embodiments of current efforts to provide a multi-stakeholder network on ICT4D. The Global Alliance will therefore need to collaborate closely with the GKP and other networks to strengthen a joint effort by supporting them with convening power and reach that come with a United Nations affiliation.

The WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, and especially the recently adopted *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* attach “great importance to multi-stakeholder implementation at the international level” and encourage “the development of multi-stakeholder processes at the national, regional and international levels for policy dialogue and building partnerships with a view to the expansion and diffusion of the Internet as a means to support development effort and achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs” (Tunis Agenda, paragraph 80). The proposed Global Alliance, by providing an inclusive multi-stakeholder global platform and forum for policy dialogue on the use of ICT for enhancing the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, will respond directly to this call.

The Alliance will present an innovative, inclusive and interactive channel for multi-stakeholder input to policy debate to be conducted in intergovernmental organs - CSTD and ECOSOC. To this end, the Alliance will, in partnership with CSTD

Secretariat, help organize a multi-stakeholder platform as the multi-stakeholder component of the CSTD review of WSIS follow-up and implementation. Similarly, the Global Alliance will also help organize, in partnership with ECOSOC Secretariat, multi-stakeholder roundtables in the context of ECOSOC's reviews of cross-cutting themes linking the WSIS outcome to the integrated follow-up to and implementation of other UN conferences and summits.

In terms of substance of their respective work, the Alliance and the Internet Governance Forum are envisaged as distinct streams of activities since the IGF will focus on “public policy issues related to key elements of Internet Governance” (Tunis Agenda, paragraph 72), while the Alliance will address a much broader array of issues relevant to the use of ICT for advancing development.

Consultations demonstrated that several guiding principles enjoy multi-stakeholder support and are considered essential features of the Alliance:

- The Alliance should build on the experience of and further advance the work of initiatives such as the DOT Force and the UN ICT Task Force, as well as the experience of the WSIS process, providing a platform and a forum for cross-sectoral policy and partnership dialogue with the full and equal engagement and collaboration of all stakeholders representing relevant constituencies from all parts of the world.
- The Alliance should make full use of and cooperate with existing institutions and networks² and their forums and collaborate, in a coherent and complementary manner, with other activities related to WSIS follow-up, by enhancing multi-stakeholder, cross-cutting and cross-sectoral dialogue on global ICT for Development (ICT4D) and Information Society issues, thus contributing to the effectiveness, visibility and development impact of these entities and initiatives and enhancing their inclusive character.
- The Alliance should significantly expand the circle of participants in policy debate beyond the traditional set of stakeholders, by active outreach aimed at engaging younger champions of ICT4D, non-governmental participants from developing countries, media, academia and other constituencies that currently are not adequately involved.
- The Alliance should help identify and focus attention on priority issues related to ICT4D that are not adequately addressed, or where “intellectual

² Including, but not limited to relevant organizations of the United Nations system (ITU, UNDP, UNESCO, WIPO, UNCTAD, the World Bank, Regional Commissions and others), Global Knowledge Partnership, regional development banks, private sector organizations (GBDe, GIIC, ICC, WITSA), civil society, Internet community, media organizations including regional broadcasting unions such as the European Broadcasting Union, and others.

vacuum” persists, with a view to triggering action by relevant stakeholders and fostering problem-solving partnerships.

- The Alliance should be a model of using technology to enhance efficiency of interaction, including by making extensive use of virtual collaborative tools.
- The Alliance should be linked to the United Nations and work under the authority of the Secretary-General and the auspices of the ECOSOC, reporting periodically, through the Secretary-General, to ECOSOC for assessment and guidance. Responding to the call of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (in particular paragraph 80) adopted by the Tunis phase of WSIS, the Global Alliance will provide indispensable multi-stakeholder complement at the international level to the intergovernmental follow-up process led by ECOSOC.
- The Alliance must pursue an active outreach policy to ensure transparency and visibility of its work and results.
- . The Alliance will need to build on, sustain and strengthen the global and regional networks created by the ICT Task Force , and should be based on open and participatory principles.
- The Alliance will not create a new United Nations organization but will function as a decentralized multi-stakeholder network and partnership drawing upon and interlinking with existing institutions and forums. The Alliance will not have an operational, policy-making or negotiating function. Its role will be in strengthening the work and activities of existing UN and other organizations, not duplicate them.
- Since the Alliance will be financed by voluntary contributions of its members and partners, it will not have financial implications for the regular budget of the United Nations. However, in order to ensure full transparency and accountability, it would function in accordance with relevant United Nations financial rules and regulations.

Objectives

The Alliance will seek to contribute to the achievement of the following objectives:

- Mainstreaming of the global ICT agenda into the broader United Nations development agenda;

- Bringing together key organizations involved in ICT4D to enhance their collaboration and effectiveness in the use of ICT for development and the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals;
- Raising awareness of policy makers on ICT4D policy issues;
- Facilitating identification of technological solutions for specific internationally agreed development goals and promoting pertinent partnerships;
- Creating an enabling environment and innovative business models for pro-poor investment and growth and for empowering people living in poverty;

The Alliance will also act as a “think-tank” on ICT4D-related issues and as an Advisory Group to the Secretary-General.

Functioning modalities

The principal modality of functioning will be that of a decentralized network of forums, institutions and think-tanks, bringing them together into a global forum under the patronage of the Secretary-General and the auspices of ECOSOC.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the Alliance will promote focused dialogue on ICT4D issues, primarily by virtual means and during related events. It will function as a multi-stakeholder partnership supported by the United Nations³, and should in principle be linked with the broader UN development agenda leading to 2015. Its functioning should be reviewed periodically (every 2-3 years) to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.

The Alliance will rely on light and agile structures tailored to specific topics that the Alliance may decide to address. A high-level Advisory Board will provide strategic overall guidance to the work of the Global Alliance, ensure engagement of top-level expertise and leadership, and facilitate effective outreach and influence with leaders of today and tomorrow. The organizational direction will be provided by a small Steering Committee. These mechanisms will be formed on the basis of balanced representation in terms of regions, stakeholders and gender, and allow nomination of representatives by their constituencies (civil society, private sector, academia).

Identification of priorities and themes to be pursued in policy dialogue will be done in open consultation with general membership.

³ The United Nations supports multi-stakeholder partnerships in a number of areas (sustainable development, water, energy, HIV/AIDS, and others).

Core organizational and administrative support will be provided by a small secretariat based initially at UN Headquarters in New York, with possible regional- and stakeholder-based nodes.

Participation

As distinct from previous initiatives, the Alliance will be open to participation of all stakeholders, including governments, business, civil society, international organizations, industry groups and professional associations, media, academia, and the broad ICT and development communities. Groups of participants would coalesce around specific topics of mutual interest put forward for discussion.

Funding arrangements

The Alliance activities will be funded by voluntary contributions, both financial and in-kind (such as providing networking support, hosting meetings, contributing to logistical or staff support, co-producing publications, etc.).